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Management Objectives and Policies for the High Mountain Areas of National Forests of the Pacific Northwest Region



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Forest Service

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	1
Dependency of the Pacific Northwest on the National Forests	1
National Forest Multiple Use Management	2
Multiple Use Planning--Pacific Northwest Region	3
Landscape Management Areas	3
Grass-Shrub Resource Association.....	3
Principal Forest Resource Association	4
Upper Forest Resource Association.....	4
Alpine Resource Association	5
The "High Mountain" Area	5
Management Objectives	6
Policies.....	6
Water.....	6
Recreation	6
Wildlife	7
Range.....	7
Timber.....	7
Minerals.....	8
Occupancy.....	8
General	8

PREFACE

This statement of objectives and policies for the management of the high mountain areas of the National Forests in Oregon and Washington has been prepared at the request of the Secretary of Agriculture. It is the result of a thorough comprehensive re-examination of policies; study of "high mountain" areas with a description and definition of that term; review and analysis of present management objectives; and careful consideration of the need for additional policies for future management. Existing and proposed policies were reviewed through on-the-ground examinations. The Regional Forester, all 19 Forest Supervisors, and the Chief of the Forest Service and his staff participated.

To obtain a clear and comprehensive picture of the general situation, the scope of the investigation was broadened to include both high and low country even though this report is concerned only with a portion of the Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region. Particular attention was directed to the 9-1/4 million acres of "undeveloped area"* outside of classified Wild, Wilderness, and Primitive Areas (40 percent of the 23.9 million acres of National Forest land in the Region). The main reason for this study stemmed from proposed Forest Service plans for present and future use of undeveloped country. The report does not cover Wild, Wilderness, and Primitive Areas because they are administered under Secretary's regulations specifically applicable to such areas.

DEPENDENCY OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST ON THE NATIONAL FORESTS

A large part of the economy of Oregon and Washington is dependent upon multiple use development of the National Forests and National Grasslands. Rapidly growing public need for National Forest resources--outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish--emphasizes the urgency for intensive coordinated management on all lands, particularly those that are now undeveloped, but suitable for many uses.

The National Forests and National Grasslands make up nearly one-fourth (22.9%) of the land area of Oregon and Washington. Wood products and related industries account for more than half of the industrial employment, followed by agriculture and tourism as the second and third major sources of income. Water, supplied by mountain watersheds, is closely related to industrial, agricultural, and recreational expansion. Thus the economic prosperity of the Pacific Northwest is in large measure directly or indirectly dependent on use of the National Forests.

Watersheds of the National Forests supply municipal water for 42 percent of the people of Oregon and 36 percent of Washington's inhabitants. Almost

*Undeveloped area: Areas of 5,000 acres or more at least one-quarter mile or more from an existing road.

one-half (45%) of the total streamflow of the two States originates in the National Forests. With the rapidly increasing population and corresponding need for more water and water power, many potential water storage sites within the National Forests will require development. To meet total resource needs, water development must be effectively coordinated with other resource uses and special emphasis given to increased recreational opportunities.

Last year the National Forests furnished one-third of the timber harvest in these two States. Shortage of timber available for sale from private lands is increasing the pressure on National Forests for supplies of wood products.

Continued production of minerals is a valuable use of the National Forests, and mining will become increasingly important in the future as the more accessible supplies are exhausted.

Forage for livestock grazing is also a major factor because a significant portion of this industry depends upon National Forest range for ranch and community stability. Mountain summer range rounds out and provides a balanced yearlong operation for many ranchers. Much of the same land used by livestock must also supply forage for wildlife, and hunting is a favored outdoor recreation pursuit.

Recreational use on the National Forests for the Region in 1960 jumped 16 percent over the previous year to a record 9-1/2 million visits. If present trends continue, this will reach 25 million visits by 1975 and 70 million visits by the year 2000. Nearly all of this potential recreation use will be by family campers and picnickers and water and winter sports enthusiasts. It will have to be accommodated on lands that must also support substantially increased use for other purposes.

Public interest in wilderness preservation is growing with mounting pressure to increase the area of National Forest land classified as wild and wilderness areas. Over 2 million acres (8.9%) in the Region already are included in 14 Primitive, Wild, and Wilderness Areas. The need to increase the area of wilderness must be weighed against all other existing and potential uses of the particular area being considered, to determine the highest public benefit.

NATIONAL FOREST MULTIPLE USE MANAGEMENT

The Forest Service is directed by law to manage the National Forests for multiple use and sustained yield (Public Law 86-517, June 12, 1960). Management objectives and policies for the "high mountain" areas must be consistent with this Congressional directive. With increased need for resources and increased public use, coordination becomes more complex because of competing special interests. The key to wise resource use on the National Forests now and for the future is skillful, responsive multiple use management.

MULTIPLE USE PLANNING--PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION

In order to develop management objectives and policies for the "high mountain" areas, it is necessary to consider them in the light of those for the entire National Forest area of the Pacific Northwest.

Determination of key resource values for broad areas is a multiple use planning device. This is done by considering the needs and desires of people together with environmental factors such as topography, vegetative cover, and other natural features. Key resource values are those resources that have been assigned high priority for a given area after thorough analysis of all factors, including national and regional objectives. They serve as a hub around which coordination takes place. Other resource uses may be modified, if necessary, to favor the key values. For example, water is a key resource value on a municipal watershed, and timber, recreation, range, and wildlife uses may be modified to maintain water quality or improve water yield.

For planning purposes the National Forest lands in these two States are classified in four broad resource management associations. They are the Grass-Shrub, Principal Forest, Upper Forest, and Alpine Associations. Each is a product of environmental factors characterized by generally homogeneous resource values and susceptible to common management objectives and policies. Cutting across or located within all of these natural associations is another land classification category, the Landscape Management Area. This is an administratively designated area created by land use and human occupancy.

Landscape Management Areas

Landscape Management Areas have special significance because of their high recreational value. These are areas that now receive or will receive in the future heavy public use and are found mainly along streams and recreation travel routes or around lakes. They include the primary foreground needed to provide a scenic view from roads, trails, and other recreation areas. These special areas require a type of management different from that applied to the association in which they occur. They will be managed to provide an attractive environment for scenic enjoyment and recreational use. For this reason they are recognized as separate management units. These areas vary in size depending on such factors as topography, vegetation, and quality of the recreational attraction. In some instances they may extend a considerable distance back from heavy public use sites with various gradations in modification of resource use. Within these Landscape Management Areas aesthetics and recreation are recognized as key values with all other resources and activities managed to maintain or enhance recreation values.

Grass-Shrub Resource Association

The Grass-Shrub Association is characterized by grass, scattered pine, juniper, and sagebrush ground cover and is located at relatively low elevation. It is usually found on the drier east side of the Cascade Mountain Range and

contains the smallest area of the four associations. It is principally valuable for production of forage for livestock and game.

Here management objectives recognize optimum sustained forage production for domestic livestock and wildlife as the key resource value to be used in harmony with soil and water resource requirements and with recognition given to recreation features of unique, scenic, and unusual interest areas. Appropriate recognition will be given to other resource values wherever they are present.

Principal Forest Resource Association

The Principal Forest Association lies immediately above the Grass-Shrub Association east of the Cascades. On the west side of the Cascades it starts near sea level. Steep topography and heavy precipitation are major factors to be considered in management on the western slope. This Association is the more heavily forested area, supporting Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and lodgepole pine, with various associated species. It contains a major part of the commercial timber-producing land as well as the highest quality and heaviest yielding timber stands of the Region.

The major streams and travel routes cut across this Association. It is the most accessible of the four associations to population concentrations. In addition to providing the bulk of the Region's timber, it must also provide outdoor recreational opportunities for large numbers of people.

The management objectives within this Association must give primary emphasis to sustained production of high-quality timber but to do so in a manner which recognizes associated values and protects the water and recreational features of the intermingled Landscape Management Areas.

Upper Forest Resource Association

The Upper Forest Association is located immediately above the Principal Forest Association and extends upward in elevation almost to timberline. There are numerous mountain lakes and meadows and moderately sloping mountainsides. This Association is characterized by true fir-mountain hemlock stands, including lodgepole pine, spruce, and other high elevation species. Timber varies from dense stands at lower elevations to clump-like stands separated by lakes and meadows at higher elevations. The timber generally is poorer in quality, lower in value, and higher in defect than that found in the Principal Forest Association. Because of the topographic, vegetative, climatic, and numerous scenic features, Landscape Management Areas may occur in large blocks. The complexities and natural attributes require that plans for the Landscape Management Areas within this Association be geared to future recreational needs while other parts can be harmoniously managed for most National Forest purposes including the optimum sustained production of timber.

Alpine Resource Association

The Alpine Resource Association extends from near timberline to the crest of the mountains. Much of this area is above 5,000 feet. It contains high-elevation lakes, open alpine meadows, glaciers, and outstanding scenery. Soils are fragile and precipitation, mostly snow, is heavy. Access generally is by trail and public use is correspondingly light. Most of the existing and potential winter sports recreational areas and classified wilderness areas are located in this Association.

Management objectives emphasize retention of natural conditions, particularly in classified Wilderness Areas, but recognize the need to provide for other types of recreational experience which can best be met in this resource Association. Management to produce optimum yields of water, fish, wildlife, and forage for domestic livestock including saddle and pack stock are concurrent objectives.

THE "HIGH MOUNTAIN" AREA

All that has been stated before is background for this section of the report. It is the frame within which a part of the Pacific Northwest Region, the "high mountain" area, is set.

The "high mountain" area includes all of the Alpine Resource Association and all of the Landscape Management Areas of the Upper Forest Association. The Landscape Management Areas within the Upper Forest Association will include the following kinds of features:

- (1) Plateaus and benches containing a series or group of small lakes, or containing a combination of lakes, meadows, and open clump-like stands of timber;
- (2) Rough broken topography with rock slides, snow avalanches, and other features that make the area significantly scenic;
- (3) Narrow fringes or stringers of timber lying as buffer strips adjacent to highly scenic alpine areas;
- (4) Areas surrounding larger lakes or along roads and streams including foreground areas.

Most of the Region's classified Wilderness and more than four million acres of undeveloped country are found in the high mountain area but the policies outlined herein do not apply to classified Wilderness Areas. Most of the Region's 26 winter sports developments are in the high mountain area. There are some roads, campgrounds, and picnic areas that permit large numbers of people to enjoy high mountain scenery. Numerous potential sites for additional similar recreational developments are found here.

Management Objectives

1. Management of all resources will be planned to keep soil in place, to maintain or improve its productivity, and its ability to absorb and store precipitation.

2. Watershed values will be given primary consideration by managers to promote optimum yields and deliveries of usable water in stable streamflows or subsurface supply.

3. Lands will be managed to maintain or enhance opportunities for more people to have both conventional outdoor recreation and wilderness experience with minimum modification of the landscape so as to maintain a near-natural, scenic appearance. Fish and wildlife management will be emphasized because of its importance in recreation pursuits.

Policies

Water

1. Water developments needed for domestic water supply will be given high priority.

2. Municipal watersheds will be managed for optimum multiple use with emphasis on maintenance or improvement of water quality.

3. Where downstream water needs are high in relation to water supply or where water flows fluctuate sharply, structural measures such as dams or other devices will be permitted. Coordinated developments will be encouraged to obtain the maximum combined benefits to the public from water use for all purposes.

4. Permitted water structures will be designed to blend with the natural setting.

5. Approval for proposals to alter the free flow of water in natural channels or to raise or lower natural lakes will be contingent upon adequate standards and safeguards to protect related values and provide for multiple use needs, if other feasible courses of action are impossible.

6. Existing undeveloped power and reclamation withdrawals will be recommended for revocation when analysis of economic and social impacts of development clearly demonstrates that such use is not in the best public interest.

Recreation

1. Specialized recreation facilities will be developed to give a greater number of people an opportunity to enjoy high mountain scenery and activities. Such development will include roads, trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, scenic vistas, winter recreation sites, mountain resorts, and shelters. These facilities will be designed to retain scenic qualities, recognizing the needs for both concentrated family recreation and primitive type recreation use.

2. Wilderness classification will be recommended for those areas which possess wilderness characteristics following a thorough study which clearly shows that the highest and best public use will be served by such classification.

Wildlife

1. Wildlife habitat will be maintained and improved to the extent necessary to provide an adequate food supply for a predetermined level of wildlife population.

2. Proper balance between wildlife populations and food supply will be sought through State fish and game department programs of game harvest.

3. In key wildlife areas, wildlife will be given preference for available forage.

Range

1. Domestic livestock, including pack and saddle animals, will be permitted to graze in numbers and on areas as are determined to be suitable to that use after analysis of the range and needs of associated uses.

2. Revegetation will be undertaken where needed for game habitat, watershed improvement, and livestock forage production.

Timber

1. In the Alpine Association, except for classified wilderness areas, timber may be removed for the following purposes and in a manner compatible with overall management objectives:

a. Development of recreation, wildlife, water resources, and for public safety.

b. Control of insect and disease epidemics.

c. Salvage of extraordinary losses and for reduction of fire hazard when such salvage will not detract from recreational values.

d. Research in watershed management.

e. Occupancy or administrative use necessary for approved multiple use management.

2. In the Landscape Management Areas of the Upper Forest Association, recreation use will be given priority and timber will be managed to produce a thrifty, healthy forest cover that is aesthetically pleasing. Harvesting methods will be designed to avoid large openings in the forest canopy and to minimize logging disturbance. In the primary foreground areas close to sites of concentrated public use, modification of the degree and manner of timber harvesting will be greatest and may be little more than removal of dead, dying, and diseased trees. This is necessary to preserve the attractiveness

of streamsid es, lakesid es, and recreation travel routes. Progressing back and away from heavy use areas, timber management modifications become less restrictive and may be graduated so as to blend into the timber production area.

3. In occupancy areas, such as camp and picnic grounds and summer homes or resort sites, timber harvesting will be designed to remove diseased, dying, and danger trees, and those which must be cleared for occupancy.

4. Lands located outside of the Landscape Management Areas in the Upper Forest Association where recreation is not the key value will be managed under the objectives and policies applicable to the Principal Forest Association, when timber can be harvested with a reasonable assurance of good utilization and prompt regeneration.

Minerals

1. The Forest Service has no control over prospecting and mining on valid claims filed under the General Mining Laws. However, miners and prospectors will be encouraged to conduct their activities in a manner designed to alleviate detrimental impacts on other uses. Location and construction of access roads to mining claims will be coordinated with other resources and uses.

2. Mineral materials permits will be issued for commercial development of common materials, not subject to location under the mining laws, only when compatible with basic management objectives.

3. Sites to be developed for recreation or administrative use will be recommended for withdrawal from mineral entry.

4. Areas containing special interest materials, such as geodes, agate, jasper, and crystals, not in commercial quantity, will be managed for public use and enjoyment.

Occupancy

1. Commercial facilities, such as lodges, resorts, and public service sites will be permitted when there is a demonstrated public need which cannot be satisfied on private land. Other land occupancy will be allowed as needed to serve resource and administrative use. These facilities will be located outside and back from the recreational zones along roads and streams and around lakes except for public service facilities which, because of their nature, must be in these areas.

2. Necessary rights-of-way for installation of powerlines, gas lines, ditches, flumes, roads, highways, etc., will be designed and located to harmonize with management objectives of the Alpine Resource Association and Landscape Management Areas. Where possible, rights-of-way for new installations will be combined with existing ones to minimize impacts.

General

Areas possessing rare or unique species of wildlife and plant life, geologic phenomena, or historical or archaeological features will be managed for preservation and public enjoyment.

